



Within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the **BEATRICE STATE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER** provides 24-hour residential, medical, habilitative and consultative services for Nebraskans with mental retardation or related conditions.

BSDC VISION: *Best Support for Dignity and Choice: "Learning for Life."*

Interim Center CEO named

John Wyvill, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, announced in February that **Clare E. Mahon**, MSW, would become Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC). A search continues for a permanent CEO. Already working with BSDC as part of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services oversight, Mahon is a management consultant for public and private human services and health care agencies from New Jersey.

Mahon's experience includes operational responsibility for a state developmental disability agency; programs providing community-based residential, day program and supported employment for people with developmental disabilities; and developing Home and Community-based



Clare E. Mahon

Waiver services.

She also served on a special assignment as CEO of Woodbine developmental Center in New Jersey for 15 months. During this time, she administered the decertified state ICF/DD facility serving 700 clients and employing 1,400 staff while it regained certification.

Mahon took the helm at BSDC on February 16.

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Former Center citizen finds new home in Wayne, Nebraska, a comfortable fit

Moving from a place one called home for 44 years can be more than a physical relocation. Leaving a familiar setting and old friends for an unfamiliar place and new faces involves both challenges and opportunities.

Just ask former Center citizen **Diane Anderson**. She is among the many clients leaving BSDC behind to live in a community setting.

“Northstar Services at Wayne, Nebraska, began to support Diane on April 28, 2008, when we arrived in Beatrice to bring her to her new home,” says **Robyn Hurlburt**, Northstar Area Director. “But the transition really began several months before with Diane, her family and a BSDC team visiting Wayne. She was able to meet Northstar staff and future roommates, as well as tour the home where she would live.”

The transition process was very smooth, and the Beatrice team very helpful and supportive, according to Hurlburt. She adds that Northstar called often during the first week, and the Beatrice staff always took time to answer all questions.

After some initial hesitation, Diane’s mom now agrees that the move was a good thing.

“When the move was first proposed, I dragged my feet and didn’t think it was a good idea because BSDC did a great job of caring for her,” says **Adele Homewood**,



Moving to a new home after 44 years in one place could prove a challenge for anyone, but former Center citizen Diane Anderson is up to the task.

Photo: Jeremy Coufal

Diane’s mother. “Now that Diane is settled in and adjusting so well, we as a family couldn’t be happier.”

Playing a key role was **Justin Roberts**, Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator in the DHHS Wayne office.

“Justin developed an excellent rapport with Diane’s mother,” says **Leroy Schafersman**, Administrator of Developmental Disabilities in the DHHS Fremont office. “I believe this was part of the reason she trusted her daughter to come to the community.”

“Justin coordinated the move and helped make Diane’s new home a comfortable fit,” says **Jane Cleveland**, Services Coordination Supervisor in the DHHS Dakota City office.

“It’s been nearly a year since Diane moved to Wayne, and Diane has adapted well to her new life,” Hurlburt says. “We feel privileged to know her.”

Northstar direct care staff members feel the same way.

“Diane has a great sense of style, likes to dress up and loves hats,” says **Rebecca Goos**. “She has been a great addition to our household.”

“Diane really loves to go for walks in her new community,” says **Traci Foote**.

“Diane shows a lot of patience with her new roommates,” says **Angie Mahurin**.

“She is also very determined with whatever task is at hand,” adds **Jessica Scott**.

Moving can be a challenge for anyone, but Diane Anderson demonstrates that a move can also open doors to new experiences and a fresh start.

The following editorial is from **James Plate**, former Center citizen who contributed to *Sower* for three years, edited a newsletter of his own for BSDC clients, and is now served by Mid-Nebraska Individual Services (MNIS) in Kearney. Thanks to MNIS Production Assistant **Kathy Quail**, James' articles continue to appear in *Sower*.

Words of Wisdom

By James Plate

Working at a place where they believe in rehabilitation can sometimes be stressful, especially when you don't really like some of the people that you are working with. Don't get me wrong, I like most of them.

The one's that I don't, well they do not understand me. Oh, maybe they just don't see me for who I am, and I am a really good guy. The majority, those that I like, can see that I have come a long way.

I know there a couple of



James Plate

Photo: Roger Girch

things that I need to work on, well... maybe a little more than that, but that is why I am somewhere that has rehabilitation. Even the ones that I don't like should know that.

Nothing more to say for now.

Your friend,
James

Quit now or keep on reading?

If you think you've read all you need or want to know in this issue, *think again*. On coming pages, you'll learn more about individuals with developmental disabilities who meet challenges head-on and those who care for and about them and support their efforts to succeed.

If you would like to learn more than these pages offer, there's a ready remedy at hand. Just contact the editor by any means listed in the editorial box below, and you'll get a quick response.

If you have an interest in people with developmental disabilities and services provided for them, *Sower* relies on all available resources to provide the information you want to know. Let us know what you want to know, and we'll do our best to deliver.

BSDC Family and Friends Association seeks funds

The BSDC Family and Friends Association raises funds to purchase items tax dollars can't. More than 40 years old, the Association is incorporated and granted federal tax exemption.

Please send your donation to the BSDC Friends and Family Association in care of **Joel Bute** at 1126 North 150th Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68154. If you want more information about developing a trust for a person served that may ultimately benefit the BSDC Family and Friends Association, please contact Joel at the address above or call (402) 496-1686.

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ADA/AA/EOE

Small church, BSDC parents latest examples of ensuring happy holidays for Center citizens

A spirit of giving is common to churches, as shown by members of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Cook, Nebraska. Cook is a community of just over 300 people in southeast Nebraska, and St. Paul's has a congregation of around 100 members served by **Pastor Curtis Rieger**.

For as many as 50 years, St. Paul members have been helping ensure that clients at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) have a very merry Christmas indeed.

"Members remember bringing BSDC gifts to church when they were children," says **Tammy Hays**, who now coordinates the activity. "People remember mostly giving mittens and gloves, but now we ask for a dozen or so names of clients and what they might need or want for Christmas. Then whoever wants to take name buys a present on the wish list."

When these gifts arrive at the Switchboard in the Administration Building, **Jane Harms**, a Center Social Worker, usually picks them up and delivers them with help from a campus patrolman.

"The packages are wrapped beautifully, and you can tell the love that goes into these gifts," Harms says. "Our nation might be having hard economic times, but you wouldn't know that by the United Church of Christ members who give to Center citizens every



Social Worker Jane Harms hands the last of more than a dozen holiday gifts donated by the UCC Church in Cook, Nebraska, to Center Security Chief John Snyder for delivery to Center citizens. Photo: Jerry Crisp

year in good times and bad!"

Speaking for the rest of the congregation, Tammy Hays says "Our church has always been about giving to others."

According to Harms, many who receive these gifts write personal thank you notes to the church to show their appreciation.

Like St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Cook, Nebraska, other churches, community groups and individuals join with Center employees to ensure that Center citizens enjoy happy holidays. Social Worker **Nancy Mayfield** offers one shining example.

"BSDC parents doing Christmas shopping for their son asked if

there was someone else at the facility for whom they might provide a gift," Mayfield explains. "They sent a \$100 check, requesting that the gift be given anonymously."

The money was used toward purchase of a TV a Center citizen had been wanting for Christmas.

Those who are part of this effort know that we gain more by giving than getting—a truism that we all need to be reminded of from time to time. The examples set by St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Cook, Nebraska, and the parents of a Center citizen are simply the most recent reminders.

To help “unlock voices” for individuals with developmental disabilities, Sower offers this installment in a series of interviews with Center citizens.

Speaking for myself

Patrick Pillow is a fellow who believes in putting people first. His credo is “Be a nice guy, and don’t hurt anyone,” and he tries to live up to it every day.

Maybe that’s why he has been Treasurer, Vice-President and now President of the People First organization, a group he’s headed for a couple of years. Maybe that’s why he has aspirations to serve on the state level in the future.

Asked what that group is out to change, and Patrick replies “People who put people second,” and it’s hard to argue with that.

Patrick is a fellow with goals who takes steps to achieve them.

For example, he likes to make money, so he builds pallets at the campus Wood Shop, packages bolts and screws, and mows lawns in Beatrice.

Next spring, Pat starts a new job watering a couple of hundred newly-planted trees on the west side of campus astride a riding lawn mower with a 55 gallon water tank. Using nearby hydrants, he will refill the tank often, as each tree requires about five gallons a week.

He also likes to win, so he competes in Special Olympic events of shot put and track and field. As a matter of fact, he has won a 1st place medal in shot put, and 2nd and 3rd place medals in track and



Patrick Pillow with Brenda Guenther, his direct care provider and friend *Photo: Jerry Crisp*

field.

For fun, Patrick rides his bike around the campus “Bluebird Trail,” but even when enjoying himself, he focuses on future goals. Next year, he hopes to have a job watering trees on that trail.

Patrick also has goals for the future, including getting his GED, a driver’s license and a truck. He’d also like to take a cruise to either Hawaii or Jamaica, but plans to be cautious about any swims in the ocean “where jellyfish, sharks and squid are known to live.” Patrick might be a man with plans, but that doesn’t mean taking any risky chances.

If Patrick could be anyone in the world, it would “The Terminator,”

the character played by **Arnold Schwarzenegger**. According to Patrick, “No matter what happens to him, he just gets up and keeps after the bad guys.” If he had one wish in life, it’s to “be a nice guy who doesn’t hurt but helps people.”

Perhaps Patrick feels that way because of people who have helped him. He says the employees he feels closest to are Developmental Technician **Greg Guenther** and Greg’s wife, Human Services Treatment Specialist **Brenda**.

A person with goals who takes steps to achieve those goals, Patrick Pillow believes in putting people first, not second and works to encourage others to do the same — a pretty good goal for anyone.

Northstar client takes big step toward independence

By **Justin Roberts**,
Developmental Disabilities Services Coordinator,
Wayne, Nebraska

Jerrad Martin has been working diligently to gain a life of independence ever since he became a state ward. Now 24, Jarrad had lived in several settings before finally finding a fit with NorthStar in Wayne.

For two years, Jarrad has focused his energy on developing the necessary skills to become gainfully employed and earn enough money to move into his own apartment. Now his primary goals have been met. He works 20-25 hours a week at McDonalds in Wayne and November 1st moved to his very own apartment.

Jerrad has shown great perseverance and patience in dealing with this process, which at times felt like an eternity to him. He showed great integrity by standing up for himself and convincing team members that he was ready to move out onto his own. He was responsible enough to be able to purchase furniture and other things for his apartment over the past few months so the financial burden would not be so heavy at the time of the move.

Jerrad's first full month on his own was not without challenges but still very rewarding. He just swells with pride when I visit with him about this great accomplishment.

To my mind, this is another great example of *Helping People Live Better Lives*.



Jarrad Martin
Photo: Jeremy Coufal

Center launches 'Red Hat Society' chapter at BSDC

Virginia Meehan, a consultant to BSDC's Quality Improvement Department from Liberty Healthcare, suggested that the "Red Hat Society" might be a good activity for Center citizens. Recreation Director **Julie Belding** agreed, and the idea was put into action.

The Red Hat Society is an international club for women who don red hats and purple dresses and engage in group activities for "fun, friendship, freedom and fulfillment." While the Society focuses on women over age 50, the BSDC Chapter welcomes members of all ages.

The BSDC Red Hat Society is facilitated by **Diane Waltke**, Activity Specialist in the Recreation Department, along with Recreation Aide **Andrea Gregory**. Others assisting clients to enjoy a great Red Hat experience include Human Services Treatment Specialists **Ginnie Winkle**, **Natasha Bartles**, **Pat Sookram** and **Bonnie Oria**.

The Red Hat Society began in 1997 when **Sue Ellen Cooper** and a group of five friends in Fullerton, California, dressed in red hats and purple dresses for an afternoon tea. Although the founder didn't set out to ignite an international phenomenon, approximately 30,000 chapters now exist in all 50 states and more than 25 foreign countries.

"Now that BSDC has joined the Red Hat ranks," says Diane Waltke, "make that 30,000 and one chapters!"

Doing for others



(Above) Elizabeth Nelson puts finishing touches on a blanket donated to children at a Beatrice immunization clinic. Photo: Tera Waldron (Below) With a helping hand from Developmental Technician II Michelle Harms, Elizabeth show off a completed blanket. Photo: Jerry Crisp



Each blanket that Center citizen **Elizabeth Nelson** volunteers to make for children at a local immunization clinic is a one-yard piece of fleece with the ends tied.

"I don't get paid for this, I do it for the babies," Elizabeth says proudly.

"Elizabeth makes two to four blankets a month," says **Veronica Koenig**, Developmental Technician (DT) III.

It all began when **Amber Lovitt**, DT II, took her 18-month-old son, **Cooper**, to be vaccinated and received a blanket, and Licensed Mental Health Practitioner **Joan Stepan** suggested that making blankets for this purpose would be a great volunteer project and esteem-builder.

Like many others, Elizabeth Nelson knows that working for money is always nice, but working for others pays even more.

Elizabeth Nelson is also involved in campus recycling efforts. See article on page 8.

Getting greener and greener:

Campus-wide recycling efforts help clean environment and save money

Like many similar efforts, BSDC's recycling program started small and has built steadily. Instead of pitching paper, cardboard, newspaper, glass, plastic and aluminum cans in the garbage, employees have been recycling to reduce costs and help keep the campus and the world we all live in cleaner.

The Center has had a recycling trailer for collecting recyclable materials on the east edge of campus for several years—a step in the right direction, but employees had to cross a 50-acre campus to use it.

Recycling efforts on campus took a giant stride forward when former State Recycling Coordinator **Aaron Boucher** conducted a survey last year. Later, Boucher applied for and received a \$45,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality for three additional recycling trailers. As a result, three additional trailers were placed around campus this spring.

“One of the new trailers is on the south end of campus, another on the north end, and the third one at Food Service in the center of campus,” says **Fred DeVries**, Facility Maintenance Manager. “With all the canned foods they order and all the packaging those foods come in, Food Service is by far our largest contributor.”

Every two weeks, Groundskeeper Leader **Mike Izer** takes the recycling bin from Food Service—

containing 600 to 750 pounds of cardboard, glass and the like—to the Beatrice Recycling Center.

Thanks to the trailers, DeVries says there are fewer dumpsters on campus now—“A good indication that people are throwing away less and recycling more,” he adds. “Recycling is free, and garbage collection costs money!”

Boucher is also pleased with recycling progress at BSDC. He

reduced significantly.

The facility also recycles oil used in all of the Transportation Department vehicles on campus.

“We have 55 vehicles including cars, pickups and other trucks, and buses,” says BSDC Transportation Department Manager **Mike Dorn**. “We also have around 50 other engines that require oil changes: forklifts, tractors, bobcats, road grader, generators, riding and push



One of four recycling trailers that serve as collection points for recyclable materials like plastics, newspaper and cardboard on the BSDC campus. Photo: Jerry Crisp

first got involved when he noted that a large amount of recyclable materials were going to the local landfill, as well as the cost BSDC was spending on garbage services each year. With assistance from Center employees and the City of Beatrice, BSDC could reduce the size of refuse containers in some locations and even eliminate them at others. As a result, the previous cost of refuse service has been

mowers, backhoe, air compressor, tree spade, Cushmans and various other small engines.”

“We recycle used oil with a burner we’ve had for several years, and it’s been very successful,” says Groundskeeper and Horticulturist Supervisor **Rick Vogel**. “Last year, we burned about 700 gallons. We use some of that to heat our grounds maintenance shop. Staff even bring oil from home to

Greening *continued*

contribute to the cause.”

“When we told Aaron Boucher that we were thinking about buying another oil burner, he suggested we apply for a grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and helped us in that process,” says DeVries. “Now another oil burner has been ordered.”

Center citizens are involved in campus recycling efforts, too.

“Eight school-age clients collect plastic bottles and paper,” says **Cathy Schock**, who, along with another BSDC Special Education Teacher, **Dianne Springer**, is involved with campus recycling. “When containers across campus fill up, folks call the classroom and students pick up bottles and paper and put them in recycling bins. I also met with Aaron Boucher, who supplied us with 30 containers to recycle paper in offices, and clients collect that, too”

Clients working at “Treasures Unlimited,” the campus thrift shop, recycle cardboard boxes.

“Our cardboard boxes come to us with the donations we receive,” says Vocational Coordinator **Lois Oden**, who supervises the thrift shop. “We take a laundry cart full of cardboard to the recycling trailer several times each week.”

Aaron Boucher realizes that his guidance proves successful only when people pick up the ball and carry it themselves. He has found that once employees and clients are aware of how they can help, they welcome the opportunity to recycle. He knows that when employees at BSDC or anywhere else realize the significant differ-



(Above) Center citizen Juanita Bax recycles cardboard boxes from the campus thrift shop *Photo: Jerry Crisp.* (Below) Center citizen Elizabeth Nelson picks up bottles and paper across campus and puts them in a recycling bin. *Photo: Dianne Springer*



ence they can make, they feel good about it and become even more committed to the cause.

“Campus recycling efforts started small and grew steadily,” says Fred DeVries. “Now that both employees and clients are involved, it’s truly a campus-wide commitment and progress comes faster and faster.”

A greener campus, a cleaner community, and a more responsible world—tangible benefits for people trying to clean up after themselves and cut costs in the process.

at a glance



FOR THE BIRDS: Center citizen **John Hoelsing** has added another task to his job list—cleaning the windows of the aviary in Carstens Activity Center. The assortment of 16 adult finches and a dozen or so babies seem to approve of John's efforts. The aviary was a gift from the Friends and Family Association several years ago and remains an ongoing point of interest for clients, employees and all who visit campus. *Photo: Jerry Crisp*



FOR OTHERS DURING THE HOLIDAYS: (l-r) W.A.T.C.H. members **Julie Bratt** and **Deb Fralin** contribute to a merrier Christmas for local children to **Donna Leikam**, family and community services coordinator for the Blue Valley Partnership. WATCH (Worthwhile Actions to Create Harmony) is an employee organization that welcomes new employees, donates a \$100 annual scholarship to harmonious high schoolers, and collects donations when staff members experience traumatic personal events.

The WATCH group also gathers gifts donated on campus during the holiday season for local families in need. BSDC receives tags from the Christmas Wish Program at Blue Valley Community Action Partnership, each with a child's name and wish list. Willing BSDC employees choose tags, go shopping and return tagged bags to WATCH members.

"The generosity of BSDC employees always blows me away," says WATCH member and Psychology Staff Assistant **Julie Bratt**. "One employee collected brand new toys throughout the year and donated them all, and another donated \$100." *Photo: Lori Drake*

When BSDC employees help
individuals with developmental
disabilities live better lives...

Facility Faces

...then Center services and
Center service providers
become one and the same.



Not one but four “Facility Faces” this time — from left to right, Center Dietitians **Debra Kolman**, **Sara Young**, **Melanie McFarlin** and **Kathy Pretzer**. In their capable hands lie the nutritional health and well-being of the Center citizens they serve.

Clinical Dietician **Sara Young** has been in her present position for 25 years.

“The most enjoyable part of my job is working around the individuals we serve,” Sara says. “Professionally, my work offers an opportunity to do a lot of different things. No two days are ever alike!”

Among Sara’s many memories include Sharing Our Best Conferences, “because for two years, dietitians made all of the desserts for a dessert bar for noon luncheons, and one year, Kathy Pretzer and I cooked a meal and gave a presentation at the luncheon on healthy eating.”

Continued on next page

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Sara also was a member of a very active Wellness Committee. “We did weight loss contests, held events so employees could participate in the Great American Smoke-out, and gave out apples at the front gate to motorists who were wearing seat belts.”

Another fond recollection involves a cooking class for clients that Sara and Speech and Hearing Services Director **Jan Goracke** facilitated twice monthly.

“We talked with clients about nutrition when we planned what we were cooking, and we talked about food preparation while we made it,” Sara explains. “They loved it!”

Dietician **Kathy Pretzer** has been in her present position for 20 years.

“The clinical challenges of meeting diverse nutritional needs of individuals we serve such as tube feedings, swallowing disorders, diabetic diets and diets for inborn errors of metabolism keep the job interesting and challenging,” she says. “What I like best about working at BSDC is the unconditional love of the individuals we care for. Their greetings are sincere and so enthusiastic!”

Kathy says one of the most memorable experiences on the job was the Beatrice tornado.

“It was a huge challenge to provide meals to individuals and employees without electricity,” she recalls. “Generators made it possible to use some appliances and keep food at safe temperatures, but our resources were greatly limited. It was great to see staff pull together to meet those needs under difficult circumstances. This was a time when we all pulled together to survive a crisis, and we were all stronger for it!”

Dietician **Debra Kolman** has been in the field for 17 years and at BSDC for nearly three years.

“This is an interesting job, since on any given day, a dietician can be working with food service, menu planning, clinical issues and of course team meetings in an effort to provide the very best care for those who live here,” Kolman says. “My favorite part of the job is interacting with individuals and employees. I really know that I am part of the team when out of the blue an individual gives me a hug.”

Dietician **Melanie McFarlin** has been a BSDC Dietician for more than a year and one-half.

“A staff member in one of the living unit kitchens was ‘temping’ some beans that were obviously simmering, but the thermometer he was using measured only 30 degrees Fahrenheit,” Melanie recalls. “I got a glass of ice water to check the calibration, and the thermometer measured 212 degree Fahrenheit!”

Since thermometers must be accurate to ensure proper temperatures needed to kill any bacteria and keep food safe, the faulty thermometer had to be re-calibrated. After safeguarding clients’ nutritional health, what Melanie most enjoys about her work is the people with whom she works.